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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA POLITICAL NEWSLETTER JANUARY 4- JANUARY 8

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1. (SBU) This was written in partnership with the Open Source Center's Pretoria Bureau. The newsletter is open to contributions from officers in the Embassy or in the Consulates who wish to highlight political trends. Contact Madeline Seidenstricker or Jonathan Smallridge for more information, or to make contributions. The newsletter also is available on the Political Section's blog, "A View from South Africa," found on intelink.gov.

Domestic News

Report Speculates Zuma Likely To Pardon Apartheid Hit-Squad Chief

2. (U) The Sunday Independent on January 3 reported that President Jacob Zuma spent more than three hours in a meeting with convicted apartheid hit-squad commander Eugene de Kock during a secret visit to Pretoria Central Prison last year. "It was two warriors from opposing sides talking about peace and reconciliation," according to sources close to De Kock who spoke to Independent Newspapers and who described the encounter as "cordial." In return for a pardon, the man once dubbed "Prime Evil" has made it clear that he is prepared to cooperate in helping with any new investigations into apartheid-era atrocities, including the recovery of bodies of victims of the security forces. De Kock was sentenced in 1996 to two life terms and 212 years on 89 criminal charges, including murder, conspiracy to murder, and fraud. [Description of Source: Johannesburg The Sunday Independent in English -- weekly newspaper, self-described as "serving the leaders and opinion-makers who are forging an inclusive democratic society," privately owned by Independent Newspaper Company]

Service Delivery Protest in the Vaal

3. (U) Residents of Mamello informal settlement near the Vaal Dam in Johannesburg on January 3 took to the streets in demand of better services. Community leader Jonas Matshaneng said he was tired of living in an area where there is no development. He said they have been living in the area for more than 20 years and there were no changes. He said protesters want housing, water, electricity, sanitation, a clinic, and schools. Gauteng Department of Housing and Local Government spokesperson Fred Mokoko told reporters that they were prepared to build houses for the residents but will meet the Midvaal local municipality to discuss the issues first. (Sowetan, January 4, 2010)

ANC to Focus on Job Creation

4. (SBU) African National Congress (ANC) Secretary General Gwede Mantashe told reporters on January 4 the country's economic climate will get worse before it gets better. Mantashe says growing the economy will be the main focus this year. The Secretary General warned that South Africans can only expect to see jobs being created

towards the end of the year. Last year, the ANC committed to creating more quality jobs and sustainable livelihoods but plans were disrupted by an economic recession leading to thousands of lost jobs. The ANC government is working hard to refine and finalize its high impact industrial strategy which seeks to deepen South Africa's manufacturing base. (SABCNEWS, January 5, 2010)

"Hawks" to Investigate Leaked National Exams

15. (SBU) A case involving Mpumalanga giving exam answers out to students ahead of South Africa's national educational test has been handed over to the government's special investigating team known as the "Hawks." Department of Education officials on January 5 told reporters the "Hawks" should take over the investigations because the unit is more advanced than the police. Thirteen people, including an official from the Department of Education, were arrested in late 2009 for releasing test answers. (Sowetan, January 6, 2010)

International News

Experts "Confident" Bomb Scares Will Not Deter 2010 World Cup Visitors

16. (SBU) The Star Online reported on January 4 that experts are confident that the foiled plot to blow up a US-bound plane on Christmas Day will not prevent spectators from flying to South Africa to attend the World Cup. The comments come amid worldwide condemnation and heightened security at airports around the world. [Description of Source: Johannesburg, The Star Online in English -- Internet version of weekday regional newspaper, privately owned by Independent Newspaper Company; URL: <http://www.thestar.co.za/>]

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South African Islamic Body Condemns Tough Security Measures for US-Bound Airline Travelers

17. (SBU) Cape Town Voice of the Cape Online reported on 06 January that the increased security measures being introduced in many countries after a failed attempt to bomb a US plane last month amounted to clear racial and religious profiling. As such, it should be resisted more than accommodated, said Iqbal Jassat, chairperson of the Gauteng lobby group, the Media Review Network (MRN), on Tuesday evening while speaking on VOC's Late Night Live. The comment came after the US announced that it would toughen security measures for US-bound airline passengers from or via 14 countries. [Description of Source: Cape Town Voice of the Cape Online in English -- Website of Voice of the Cape radio station, reporting local and international news of importance to the South African Muslim community; URL: <http://www.vocfm.co.za>]

Department of International Relations and Cooperation Minister Attends Regional Meeting

18. (SBU) Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane attended the South African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defense and Security, meeting January 7 in Mozambique. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for the African Union (AU) Summit and Executive Council and whether to support Malawi's candidacy for the chairmanship of the AU summit. There were also briefings on mediation efforts by South Africa in Zimbabwe and Mozambique on Madagascar. (DIRCO Briefing, January 5)

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